Synopsis
Vocational Education Facility
Reconstruction

Background

Under its Economic Growth Strategic Objective, USAID/Sri Lanka envisions expanding the basis of its workforce development program. The Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) estimates that the economy must generate at least two million new jobs in the next several years, especially in light of workforce changes resulting from the Multi-Fiber Agreement. USAID and the GSL recognize the need to develop a more flexible, better-trained and more productive labor force that provide alternatives to Sri Lanka's rural unemployed and the low wage trap of the garment industry.

The tsunami of December 26, 2004, destroyed a large number of vocational training facilities in Sri Lanka, and severely affected the existing workforce of communities along the south and east coasts of the country. As USAID assists Sri Lanka in post-tsunami reconstruction, there is an opportunity to rebuild and create new vocational education facilities and improve upon a part of the education system that can result in a better trained, more productive and competitive labor force.

Vision

"The overall vision of this project is to demonstrate how public/private partnerships work in vocational/technical training to facilitate qualified graduates getting and keeping jobs."

Carol R. Becker, Ph.D.
Director, USAID/Sri Lanka

Overview of Project

The vocational education component of USAID/Sri Lanka's Tsunami Reconstruction Program is an approach to vocational training that is responsive, efficient, effective, and sustainable. Through this solicitation, USAID/Sri Lanka is requesting assistance in renovating, rebuilding, or building up to 14 centers, including two new "state-of-the-art" facilities that will serve as models of "green" architecture and environmentally sustainable systems. Promoting community involvement, collaboration with the private-sector, organizational development, personnel strengthening, enhanced curriculum, and environmentally sensitive architectural design and construction will be integral to the project.

It is critical that this project not only fund the design, construction and start-up of the facilities, but ensure its effective and continual operation. The contractor will be required to implement a range of strategies ensuring that the centers are demand-driven, flexible in meeting the needs of the workforce and sustainable in the long run.

Guiding Principles

The vocational education component will, in all its aspects, incorporate the principles of the GSL Tsunami Needs Assessment and Recovery Strategy. These include conflict sensitivity and fostering peace, responding to identified needs, design and implementation at the lowest appropriate tier of governance, empowering communities, communication and transparency, debt relief or moratorium accountability, avoidance of rebuilding vulnerability to natural hazards, and coordination among GSL, donors, and NGO's.

Partnerships

A key element of USAID/Sri Lanka's approach is to encourage and facilitate private sector participation and community involvement. The GSL's Vocational Training Authority (VTA) will have a key role in guiding operation of the centers. However, the component will implement strategies to increase the role of the communities and the private sector in shaping and sustaining the training offered and leading to improvements in anticipating trends in the labor market, skills requirements,

provision of scholarships and work study internships, guest lecturers and seminar series, job placement and alumni programs.

In addition, public-private partnerships are expected to result in providing technical assistance and equipment/materials for the vo-ed facilities. Initial contacts through USAID's Global Development Alliance (GDA) indicate that there is substantial interest and potentially significant support in the local and international business community.

Assessment

To a degree, the approach to vocational educational will influence the design and operation of the physical structure of the facilities including site selection, purchase and installation of equipment and furnishings, administrative and staffing recommendations, staff training, and curriculum standards, didactic content and teaching methodology. To that end, the process of architectural design and engineering assessment for each facility will at a minimum, include:

- Community and industry needs for vocational skills
- Pre-tsunami curriculum quality and responsiveness to needs
- Available human resources and capability for staffing vocational training centers
- Facility location
- Building design/reconstruction needs
- Equipment and furnishing needs
- The student body and levels of capability upon entering the system
- Availability of "green" construction technology, materials and systems
- Potential private sponsors for construction, operations, scholarships and job placement
- GSL policy and capability to guide, administer and/or operate the centers
- Barriers to success, such as gender stereotyping and discrimination, lack of access to childcare, stigma surrounding trade professions, ethnic discrimination, political issues, and post-disaster trauma
- Need/feasibility for a residential facility
- Opportunities and options for cost recovery/revenue generation

Institutional Design and Staff/Curriculum Development

The assessment will guide the development of curriculum designed to meet specific business and industry requirements for entry-level employees, mid-level managers and/or self-employed service providers or small business owners. The curriculum at each facility will address environmental issues, materials and management systems related to the particular business or industry. The curriculum will also include information technology enabled English language and ICT skills training. Teaching methodologies and curriculum requirements for space and equipment will influence facility design and construction.

The assessment will also guide establishment of institutional systems and procedures developed and implemented in partnership with industry, communities and the GSL for administering the facility, personnel recruitment, strengthening and support, facility management that will include the operation and maintenance of environmental systems and procedures, and student recruitment, registration, training, mentoring and job placement. It will include feasible ideas and options for revenue generation and cost recovery. Facility design and construction will respond to and accommodate these institutional considerations.

The contractor will provide curriculum and put in place systems and procedures to continue to facilitate and guide periodic review and re-alignment including standards and benchmarks, materials, course content, instruction manuals with lesson plans, and production of student workbooks or textbook identification. GSL, instructors, related industries, the community, and students will participate in defining and contributing to the development of this strategy.

Facility Design and Construction

Facility design and construction will respond to 1) the results of the assessment, 2) institutional design and 3) curriculum requirements. Revision and production of curriculum, training of administrators and instructors, and the continuation of the public private partnership needed to address immediate requirements such as the expedited basic skills construction program will, because of time constraints, continue uninterrupted and simultaneously with facility construction.

In addition, the design and construction of all of the vocational educational facilities will, to the extent feasible and cost effective, utilize environmentally sensitive ("green") materials and systems, acquired locally if possible. "Environmental sustainability" will include energy efficiency, clean production, and waste handling. In particular, two new model facilities will showcase state-of-the-art applications of environmental architecture, systems, operations and furnishings.

To the degree practicable, the contractor and sub-contractors will provide apprenticeship opportunities to local youth and adults during the design and construction process. Sustainable environmental management systems will be in place and operating upon opening.

Construction will include complete outfitting of the facility with all necessary equipment, furnishings, and educational materials, supplies and resources. The buildings should serve as industry models and instructional tools for the students who will be participating in building operation and maintenance as part of their curriculum.

Location of Facilities

The program will consider three facilities in the Matara District, four in the Ampara District, five centers in the Galle District, and two in Trincomalee. The final number of facilities will depend primarily on cost considerations and the needs assessment. Distribution of centers should be equitably spread along the south and east coasts of Sri Lanka.

Budget and Timeline

USAID/Sri Lanka expects to be engaged with Vocational Reconstruction Program for approximately three years. At the end of two years, up to 14 facilities, including two model facilities will be constructed, equipped and operational. The contractor is expected to identify, promote and successfully negotiate partnerships under the Global Development Alliance in order to complement program resources available for construction, technical assistance, equipment, materials and instruction.

Coordination with Other Donors

The international community of donors and development assistance agencies and NGO's has considerable interest in vocational training in Sri Lanka. It is critical that the contractor maintain close coordination with these entities to most effectively and efficiently contribute to tsunami reconstruction and long-term development of Sri Lanka's vocational education system.